

Hnf021012

Health newsfeed for Friday, February 10, 2012

HEADLINE: PSILOCYBIN AND DEPRESSION

ANCHOR LEAD: CAN THE HALLUCINOGENIC DRUG PSILOCYBIN LEAD THE WAY TOWARD A BETTER TREATMENT FOR DEPRESSION? ELIZABETH TRACEY REPORTS

Psilocybin works in the brain differently than anyone suspected, a recent study using MRI to examine brains of people taking the drug revealed. Matthew Johnson, a psilocybin researcher at Johns Hopkins, says what's especially interesting is the impact of the drug on brain areas known as the default mode network, most active when people are daydreaming.

JOHNSON: This network is also known to play a role in depression, the activity of this particular network is stronger in depression. What this study showed is that that network, that default mode network, and two key brain regions involved with it, that there is a decreased activity across that network. :23

Johnson says that creating a drug that works in a similar fashion may turn out to be a much more targeted approach to managing depression than current therapies. At Johns Hopkins, I'm Elizabeth Tracey.